

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Maria D'Silva and I live in Portland. I am writing today to support Universal Representation, SB 1543.

When my husband was transported by ICE to NW Detention Center and later to another state, I had to sell our house, rent to strangers, leave my kids with strangers, roommates, and unprofessional caregivers, I had to give up my sense of safety, freedom and privacy and rent room to strangers to make ends meet. I had to get a second job and go into debt so I could save money to pay for an immigration lawyer. Even though my husband had 3 different immigration adjustment papers applications, still he was put in an immigration hold. Myself and my kids are US citizens so it was easy to adjust my husband's immigration status but it was not cheap. Even though I was a teacher and a model tax paying immigrant family we still were not able to afford a lawyer and convince the system that my husband should not be in jail. We were facing 10 to 15 thousand dollars in immigration bail.

We all went to counseling for our trauma. My daughter Maya would cry every night until she fell asleep missing her dad. Only a good immigration lawyer (that cost us \$7,800), a good counselor, a good community and our resilience were able to help us and make us a little bit whole again. Don't get me wrong, we did get some help but after 12 years we are still recovering from debt, and emotional trauma. My husband fell into a depression from the horrible treatment he got in Tacoma, Washington. He never recovered from it and my little children lost their father and family. My husband moved on to deal with his depression and I felt I was in poverty. We count our blessings and we are alive and we are happy that my children now can see their father once a month and that we were able to adjust his immigration status. We are grateful for the community support we received.

It could be worse. Not all the latino families have the means or resources I had to fight my husband's deportation process. Children like my kids should not be going to counseling at the age of 4. They should go to bed like my daughter, listening to her father read a story, and not wake up the next morning without their father because private jail systems and ICE institutions profit on these complex political and racist laws and circumstances. We had an opportunity to adjust my husband's immigration status when we married in 2003 but the lawyer we visited asked us for \$10,000 to bring the case. We decided to wait and save the money without knowing that in the future the ones paying the price would be our 2 little children.

For this reason and more I ask you to pass Universal Representation for all Oregonians regardless of their immigration status. Many like my husband may not have "papers" but it does not mean they don't have a "lawful right" to stay in the United States. My ex husband continues to work as in the last 17 years at a famous Japanese restaurant in NE Portland as a chef but from time to time he cries and regrets not having \$10k in his pocket to pay the immigration lawyer and prevent our marriage from falling apart. I also wonder if I could have done things differently, as I rebuilt our children's lives and focused on my emotional, economic and psychological well being. I chose to go to counseling, chose to survive, to pay the mortgage,

take the kids to school, get a 2 jobs and save our home instead of helping my husband's emotional well being, instead of helping him out of his depression cause by immigration and the lack of employment and wages while he waited for almost 2 years for him to get a green card. I will never know. But I know that we need to change the way we see community folks and immigrant workers.

What would you do if you were in my shoes? What would you choose if your spouse or significant were threatened to be thrown suddenly to another country and you don't have legal representation and the lawyers fees would force you go into poverty, bankruptcy or even suicide? What would you tell your kids? How would you continue living when you have to pay rent or food or other expenses? Where would you cry when the children are home and you want to show strength? How many doors would you knock in order to be heard? How many hours of squatting changing diapers would you do in the lawyer's office until they listen to you and take your case? How much is enough?

Enough is enough! Pass Universal Representation legislation for all Oregonians. No more fatherless crying nights for children in Oregon!

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